

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT L 00519 132017Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 FRB-03 TRSE-00

XMB-02 OPIC-03 EPG-02 OMB-01 /080 W

-----132029Z 109118 /64

R 130827Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6708

INFO AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0519

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT PGOV ECON EFIN ELAB MP

SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - MAY 13

REF: PORT LOUIS 495

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 0518 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.

END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING ON THE HEELS OF LAST WEEK'S SPATE OF RUMORS AND HOT DENIALS THAT THE MMM WAS PREPARED TO FORM AN ALLIANCE WITH THE LABOR PARTY (PORT LOUIS 495), REPORTS APPEARED IN THE PRESS OVER THE WEEKEND THAT THREE LABOR MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HAD SECRETLY MET WITH MMM LEADERS TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF GOING OVER TO THE MMM SIDE TO GIVE IT A MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT. (THOUGH THE PRESS DID NOT GIVE NAMES, THE LABOR LEGISLATORS INVOLVED WERE KNOWN TO BE MINISTER OF PLANNING GHURBURRUN, MINISTER OF COOPERATIVES DABY, AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY DOONGOOR.) OTHER PRESS STORIES FOLLOWED A FEW DAYS LATER QUOTING UNNAMED LABOR LEADERS WHO SAID THAT 7 TO 10 MMM DEPUTIES WERE "MERELY AWAITING THE WORD" TO ABANDON THE MMM FOR THE LABOR PARTY RANKS.

2. TO ADD TO THE STATE OF SUSPENSEFUL UNCERTAINTY, PAUL BERENGER, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT L 00519 132017Z

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MMM, HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE ON MAY 10, IN WHICH HE CONFIRMED HAVING MET WITH CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE LABOR PARTY'S "LEFT WING," WHOM HE SAID WERE "DISHEARTENED" WITH THE RIGHTWARD DRIFT OF THE LABOR/PMSD GOVERNMENT. IN HIS OPINION, FOUR POSSIBILITIES EXIST FOR THE NEAR TERM POLITICAL FUTURE OF MAURITIUS: (A) THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT COALITION WOULD CONTINUE "WOBBLING" ALONG TO THE GREAT DISADVANTAGE OF THE

COUNTRY; (B) SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE LABOR PARTY'S LEFT WING COULD BREAK OFF FROM THE PARTY, DECLARE THEMSELVES INDEPENDENTS, AND LEND THEIR VOTES TO A NEWLY FORMED MMM GOVERNMENT; (C) PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM COULD "STEP UP" TO THE FIGURE HEAD PRESIDENCY OF A MAURITIAN REPUBLIC, AND LEAVE THE PARLIAMENT (AND GOVERNMENT) IN THE HANDS OF THE MMM; OR (D) NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE CALLED. BERENGER REITERATED HIS STATEMENTS MADE LAST WEEK THAT THE MMM HAD NO INTENTION OF FORMING AN ALLIANCE WITH THE LABOR PARTY, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT CONTAINED SUCH LEADERS AS MINISTER OF FINANCE RINGADOO, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE BOOLELL, AND MINISTER OF LABOR YOUSOUF MOHAMED. BERENGER SEEMED TO BELIEVE THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBILITY WOULD BE THE FORMATION OF A MMM GOVERNMENT WITH THE HELP OF SEVERAL LEFT WING LABORITES. HE TOOK PAINS TO INSIST THAT THE BREAKAWAY LABOR PARLIAMENTARIANS COULD NOT BE BRANDED AS "TRAITORS" OR TURNCOATS," BUT WOULD MERELY BE INDEPENDENT DEPUTIES WHO IN GOOD CONSCIENCE WOULD BE LENDING THEIR ASSISTANCE TO THE MMM TO FORM A VIABLE MAJORITY GOVERNMENT.

3. ON MAY 12, THE PRESS HEADLINED THAT MMM DEPUTY SURESH MOORBA HAD RESIGNED FROM HIS PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE BECAUSE HE FOUND CERTAIN LEADERS OF THE MMM TO BE "INTOLERABLE" AND TO REPRESENT A "BOURGEOIS CLIQUE." HE CLAIMED THAT 5 OTHER MMM DEPUTIES WOULD SHORTLY FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE. RUMORS OF HIS DEFECTION TO THE LABOR PARTY RANKS WERE RIFE. BY WEEK'S END, HOWEVER, MOORBA, KNOWN FOR HIS OPPORTUNISTIC TENDENCIES, HAD NOT TERMINATED HIS MMM PARTY MEMBERSHIP, AND PARTY LEADER BERENGER SAID HE HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY FORMAL LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM MOORBA.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT L 00519 132017Z

4. THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SESSIONS DURING THE PAST WEEK WERE DOMINATED BY THE DEBATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET MESSAGE. IN A TWO AND ONE HALF HOUR SPEECH, BERENGER CHARGED THAT THE BUDGET WAS "FUTILE AND IRRESPONSIBLE." IN HIS OPINION FINANCE MINISTER RINGADOO REVEALED HIS INABILITY TO CALCULATE THE NEEDS OF THE WORKERS AND OF THE COUNTRY IN THE FACE OF THE RISING COST OF LIVING AND OTHER SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

5. AT ONE POINT IN HIS LONG DISCOURSE, BERENGER STATED THAT THE MMM WAS NOT AGAINST THE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE (EPZ) IN PRINCIPLE. BUT HE BELIEVED THE "FISCAL FACILITIES" (TAX EXEMPTIONS, ETC.) GIVEN THE FOREIGN ENTERPRISES WERE NOT ACCEPTABLE. WHILE THE MMM DID NOT INTEND TO NATIONALIZE THE FACTORIES IN THE EPZ, EVENTUALLY THE EPZ WOULD HAVE TO BECOME "INTEGRATED" INTO THE REST OF THE ECONOMY.

6. THE LABOR UNION FRONT, WHICH JOINED INFORMALLY LAST WEEK TO OPPOSE THE LABOR MINISTER'S PLAN TO ABOLISH THE OBLIGATORY DUES COLLECTION SYSTEM, OFFICIALIZED ITS ORGANIZATION ON

MAY 11 WITH THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL SYNDICATE FRONT. COMPOSED OF FIVE DIVERSE LABOR UNIONS, THE NEW FRONT ANNOUNCED IT WOULD CALL FOR ACROSS-THE-BOARD WAGE INCREASES AND WOULD PRESS THE EARLIER DEMAND THAT IT BE REPRESENTED ON THE GOM'S DELEGATION ATTENDING THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE IN GENEVA NEXT MONTH. IT IS CURRENTLY PRETESTING THE INCLUSION OF ONE LABOR UNION REPRESENTATIVE NOW ON THE DELEGATION, WHO IT SAYS SERVES A CIVIL SERVANT UNION THAT DOES NOT TRULY REPRESENT GOVERNMENT WORKERS.

7. THE AFRICAN-INDIAN OCEAN REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, MAURICE GASTAUD, FLEW INTO MAURITIUS MAY 9 LONG ENOUGH TO MEET WITH VARIOUS UNION LEADERS AND TO GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE. HE CAME FORTH WITH THE STANDARD STRING OF CLICHES CONCERNING THE "IMPERIALIST, COLONIALIST" POWERS WHICH OPERATE TO "EXPLOIT" THW WORKERS. HE WAS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF FRANCE'S ACTIVITIES IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PORT L 00519 132017Z

AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND EVEN CHARGED THAT FRANCE "HAD DESIGNS" ON RODRIGUES. GASTAUD WAS MET BY MMM SECRETARY GENERAL BERENGER AND BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL WORKERS FEDERATION (GWF), THE MMM-CONTROLLED LABOR UNION FEDERATION.

8. THE ELECTIONS OF JEAN-CLAUDE DE L'ESTRAC TO THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF BEAU BASSIN/ROSE HILL WAS CONTESTED THIS WEEK BY A DEFEATED LABOR PARTY CANDIDATE, WHO IS CONTENDING THAT DE L'ESTRAC IS NOT A LEGAL RESIDENT OF THE MUNICIPALITY AND IS THEREFORE DISQUALIFIED TO HOLD OFFICE THERE. THE CASE WAS FILED BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT BY THE PMSD LEADER, GAETAN DUVAL, THE CHALLENGER'S LAWYER.

9. MORE UNFORTUNATE NEWS FOR THE CONSUMER CAME THIS WEEK WHEN THE MINISTRY OF PRICES APPROVED AN INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF BREAD. EACH 100 GRAMS OF BREAD WILL COST 15 CENTS INSTEAD OF 13. THE MINISTRY DECIDED ON THE INCREASE AFTER CONDUCTING A STUDY OF DEMANDS OF THE BAKERY OWNERS WHICH HAD COMPLAINED THAT BAKERS WERE SUSTAINING LOSSES AT THE OLD PRICE.

10. THE LABOR PARTY ANNOUNCED PLANS THIS WEEK TO HOLD A REGIONAL CONGRESS ON MAY 14-15 IN THE RIVIERE-DES"ANGUILLES DISTRICT. SOME 2,500 DELEGATES REPRESENTING THE VILLAGES OF THE DISTRICT ARE EXPECTED TO MEET WITH THE GOM'S 21 MINISTERS WHO WILL CHAIR SEPARATE WORKING GROUPS TO AIR CURRENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES. THE ORGANIZER OF THE CONGRESS, LABOR DEPUTY HARISH BOODHOO, SAID THAT THE CONFERENCE WOULD SERVE AS A "TEST CASE," IN THAT IF IT PROVES TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MEANS OF GAUGING THE WILL OF THE PEOPEL, OTHERS WILL BE ORGANIZED BY THE PARTY.
BROWN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PORTL00519
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770169-0913
Format: TEL
From: PORT LOUIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770561/aaaacanh.tel
Line Count: 170
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ed1b2a95-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PORT LOUIS 495
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2535574
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - MAY 13
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, ECON, EFIN, ELAB, MP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ed1b2a95-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009